

AIDS in American Literature  
Fall 2009 (W 4-7 P.M.)  
Room: 1507 Setnor

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Required Texts: ANGELS IN AMERICA by Tony Kushner; BORROWED TIME: AN AIDS MEMOIR by Paul Monette; MY BROTHER by Jamaica Kincaid; HOSPITAL TIME by Amy Hoffman; THE GIFTS OF THE BODY by Rebecca Brown; IN THE CONTINUUM by Danai Guirira and Nikkole Salter; MOTHER OF SORROWS by Richard McCann. All texts are available at the Upstate bookstore in Campus Activities Building. There will also be a packet of readings given to each student on the first day of class.

Sept 2	Introduction and Requirements Film: <u>Rent</u>
Sept 9	HANDOUT: Short stories Anatomy of an Epidemic ***Quiz Journal Due
Sept 16	HOSPITAL TIME HANDOUT: Poetry selections ***Quiz Journal Due
Sept 23	GIFTS OF THE BODY ***Quiz Journal Due
Sept 30	SELECTED POEMS ***Quiz Journal Due
Oct 7	HANDOUT: Poetry Excerpts <u>Pandemic: Facing Aids</u> (Film) ***Quiz
Oct 14	BORROWED TIME (chapters 1-4) *** Paper #1 Due (5-7 pages, typed)
Oct 21	ANGELS IN AMERICA Part One: Millennium Approaches (film excerpts too) ***Quiz Journal Due

- Oct 28 THE HEALING MUSE launch party  
4-5:30 pm Medical Alumni Auditorium  
5:30-7 pm 1507 Setnor classroom (film excerpts)
- Nov 4 ANGELS IN AMERICA  
Part Two: Perestroika (film excerpts too)  
\*\*\*Quiz  
Journal Due
- Nov 11 BORROWED TIME (chapters 5-8)  
\*\*\*Quiz  
Journal Due
- Nov 18 MY BROTHER  
\*\*\*Quiz  
Journal Due
- Nov 25 Thanksgiving Vacation
- Dec 2 IN THE CONTINUUM  
\*\*\*Quiz  
Journal Due
- Dec 9 MOTHER OF SORROWS  
\*\*\*Paper # 2 Due (10-14 pages, typed)  
Evaluation

AIDS in AMERICAN LITERATURE will examine personal and professional attitudes towards those who have the disease AIDS. Reading about and meeting a combination of fictional characters and real people, we will follow the historical progression of this disease from its initial mysterious and frightening incarnation to its current status as a chronic illness that can be managed for long periods of time with proper medication. We will look at the ensuing ethical dilemmas faced by health care professionals in today's world and those faced by our fictional characters. Questions to ponder include the following: are physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals called to a higher code of conduct and behavior when epidemics threaten? What kind of relationship can be shared by patients and practitioners engaged in a common goal of cure and/or care? How does literature affect our responses to political and cultural demands?

**OBJECTIVES:** The student will compare and contrast public and professional responses to HIV/AIDS as seen in literature, novels, poetry, and film. The student will analyze how health, illness, and identity are redefined and treated when the individual who suffers is not considered valuable, moral, or worthwhile. The student will examine the original, two-tiered system of classifying AIDS patients as either "innocent" patients who suffered unjustly or "guilty" patients who suffered accordingly for their offenses. The student will analyze if that has changed today in both the health care system and in the public discourse. The student will identify the political and

cultural and religious tensions that clustered around AIDS patients, their families, and their caregivers and analyze which of those still remains as problematic in the care of AIDS patients today. The student will be able to write an in-depth study of an assigned piece of literature, relating it to what we have discussed during the semester.

**STRUCTURE and REQUIREMENTS:** Attendance and participation are obviously important in a course like this. Bring your most open and intellectually curious self to class. If you miss class, you are responsible for checking the assignment for the next class. Each week there will be a 10-minute quiz on the week's required reading. Quizzes cannot be made up, but we will drop the lowest two at the end of the semester. Students will keep a weekly journal, with a minimum of three excerpts per week. The journal will describe the student's responses to the week's reading and to any discussions the student is having with others about the course's topics. You may send the journal to each professor via e-mail, and your journal should arrive by 4 pm each Wednesday; if you do not send the journal by e-mail, we will expect a hard copy each week at 4 pm in class. We will return hard copy to you with our comments on them.

Papers must be typed and double-spaced; writing should reflect your undergraduate or graduate status. Paper topics will be discussed a few weeks before the paper is due. Yes, spelling and grammar matter for everyone! Use an English handbook and dictionary. Graduate students will be expected to do further research on their topics; we will meet with graduate students in the first weeks of class to discuss this. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course and referral to SUNY Upstate Medical University's Judicial Board.

**GRADING:**

Paper #1 (20%)

Quizzes (10%)

Journal and Class Participation (20%)

Paper #2 (50%)